

August Meeting

The meeting began by looking at some photos sent to us by David showing the village hockey team from the late 1930's. We then heard an extract from a sound recording of Mary Cole, who was born at Rothwells Farm in 1921.

This was followed by a presentation by Steve with lots of photos as he talked about the area off Knowsley Road known as Oaks Nook which is home to a cluster of historic listed buildings. These include the Unitarian Chapel and 3 listed tombs, The Old Stables, The Duke William and Hooks Cottage. Steve gave a fascinating account of the area, using old maps, deeds and historic documents relating to the chapel and other buildings, some of which are long since demolished.

The oldest written account he could find of the area being called "Oaks Nook" is in the Chapel Trust deed of 1715 where it is spelt "Oakes Nooke". The stone pediment above the Chapel porch is topped with a stone acorn, presumably because the Chapel was built in Oaks Nook.

We were told how the 1737 Duke William coaching Inn was named after the son of George II, William Augustus the Duke of Cumberland. He later to became known as "Butcher Cumberland" after his defeat of Bonnie Prince Charlie's Scottish rebels at Culloden Moor, on the 17th April 1746.

Next we looked at "The Old Stables" that was built by the Chapel Trustees in 1768 for the convenience of those members of the congregation who travelled some distance to Chapel on horse back. Originally, the ground floor had stables with a set of mounting steps, whilst the 2 floors above were set out so that members could have a packed lunch before heading off back home. Over the years this building saw use as a school, a library, a Liberal club and a reform club before being converted to a dwelling in the 1970s.

Photos of the 1773 Hooks cottage built by farmer Nathan Brooks, showed how it had changed over the years, from starting as a detached house with 2 chimneys, to being in the middle of a row of cottages and back to being a detached property once again but with no chimneys.

The Unitarian Schoolroom on Knowsley Road was once a row of 4 cottages before being purchased by the Chapel Trustees in the early 1880s and converted into a Sunday school hall, complete with a stage.

Steve also had a great deal of information about the Old Red Lion and cottages that once adjoined Hooks cottage. The site also housed a stable, brew house and smithy.

We were told how a very deep old well was discovered during the demolition of the old Red Lion in the early 1960s prior to the construction of the bungalow that now occupies the site. We were amazed when he described how an incident whilst using the well, led to the discovery of a large underground cellar with a stone vaulted roof, leading off the well (which is in the rear garden of the bungalow).



Strangely, there seems to be no mention of the well or the substantially constructed cellar in any of the numerous deeds and documents relating to the site. It is therefore possible that they may be far older than the buildings we know occupied that site – so we were left with the mystery of when the cellar was built and what it was for. *(a fuller version of this presentation is available on the articles section of this website)*